

NEWS RELEASE

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Superfund

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***Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Releases
2002 Herculanum Blood Lead Screening Results***

Today the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), in cooperation with the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), released the results of blood lead testing conducted in 2002 on residents of Herculanum, Missouri. It is believed that Herculanum residents are at higher risk for blood lead poisoning because of the Herculanum Lead Smelter facility.

A review of the 2002 blood lead data for Herculanum residents showed a marked reduction in the percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels compared with blood lead levels in children tested in 2001. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines elevated blood lead levels in children less than 6 years of age as levels at or above 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$).

The 2002 blood lead data for children less than 6 years of age show a 50% reduction in the prevalence of elevated blood lead levels compared with 2001 data for children in this age group. Fourteen percent of Herculanum children tested in 2002 had elevated blood lead levels, compared with 28% of the children tested in 2001. The 2002 blood lead data for children living closest to the smelter (east of Hwy. 61/Commercial Boulevard) show a 62% reduction in the prevalence of elevated blood lead levels compared with 2001 data for children in this age group. Seventeen percent of children tested had elevated blood lead levels in 2002, compared with 45% of those tested in 2001.

Several factors could be responsible for the apparent reduction in blood lead levels in children living in Herculanum. These factors include actions taken by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that the lead smelter owners eliminate or reduce the sources of exposure; the community's increased awareness about potential pathways of exposure; and the health agencies' efforts to increase childhood lead testing, to increase awareness of lead poisoning and its adverse health effects, and to provide information on reducing exposures, especially for children. In addition, DHSS is aware that some of the children in the area most at risk to lead exposure from the smelter may no longer reside in that area due to property buy-outs. This also may have contributed to the reduction in elevated blood lead prevalence in 2002.

Page 2

Additional Details

- Three hundred forty people were tested in 2002 (64% fewer than in 2001, when 935 were tested): 58 children less than 6 years of age, 129 children between the ages of 6 and 17 years, and 153 adults age 18 years or older. Eight (14%) of the 58 children less than 6 years of age had elevated blood lead levels. Blood lead levels for children less than 6 years of age ranged from 2 to 28 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. Although fewer persons were tested in 2002 than in 2001, the data seem to indicate that less lead exposure occurred in 2002 than in 2001.
- In 2002, two (1.5%) of 129 children between the ages of 6 and 17 years had blood lead levels above 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. Blood lead levels for children in this age group ranged from 2 to 14 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. A comparison of data from 2002 to data from 2001 shows an 81% reduction in the number of elevated blood lead levels for children in this age group.
- Of 153 adults tested in 2002, six had blood lead levels above 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. Blood lead levels for adults tested ranged from 1 to 42 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. CDC defines elevated blood lead levels in adults as levels at or above 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. 3.99

DHSS is working with ATSDR to review the 2002 blood lead data and publish a formal written document called a health consultation. The health consultation will include a summary of the data, the department's conclusions based on the review of the data, and a statement of recommendations. The health consultation will be presented to the community at a future Community Advisory Group meeting.
